

Wayne Allard

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Contact: Sean Conway
(202) 224-6207
Brooke Morton
(202) 224-5946

ALLARD'S COCAINE SENTENCING AMENDMENT APPROVED BY SENATE TWO YEAR BATTLE TO EQUALIZE PENALTIES FOR CRACK AND POWDER COCAINE GAINS SENATE APPROVAL

Washington, D.C. – Colorado U.S. Senator Wayne Allard's two year battle to equalize the federal sentences for distribution of crack cocaine and powder cocaine gained success Wednesday when the U.S. Senate approved an amendment offered by U.S. Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Spencer Abraham (R-MI), John Ashcroft (R-MO) and Allard to the Bankruptcy Reform Act. The Senate approved the amendment 50-49.

The legislation approved by the U.S. Senate would change the current sentencing for defendants in federal court convicted of distribution of powder cocaine. Under federal law, defendants with 500 grams of powder cocaine get the same sentence as those caught with 5 grams of crack. Allard's amendment would reduce the amount of powder cocaine for a 5 year sentence from 500 grams to 50 grams.

"I believe our amendment begins to rectify an unfairness in the current law," Allard said. "This legislation will also help law enforcement officials battle drug dealers who have used this loop-whole to escape punishment."

Allard began his efforts to equalize crack cocaine and powder cocaine sentencing laws after a town meeting in the Curtis Park area of Denver and after meeting with officials from the Denver Urban League in early 1998. Currently, 90% of those convicted of dealing crack are African-Americans, while a majority of powder cocaine offenders are white.

"This issue was brought to me at one of my town meetings by a citizen who saw an injustice in the current law," added Allard. "It goes to show you that one person can make a difference. I also want to thank the Urban League of Denver for their assistance and help on this bill."

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